

*Final Review Draft (1/17/06) of the*

**Final Report and Recommendations  
for the  
Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study**

Prepared by the  
Special Study Task Force

**January 18, 2006**

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

With respect to the Special Study Area, the Task Force reaffirms the position of County Staff over the past forty-five years and finds that this area is well served by the current comprehensive plan, is not suitable for high density development of any kind, and recommends no change in the allowed density and/or permitted use of this area. The Task Force concluded:

1. The Plan designation of the Study Area as low-density residential, at .2 to .5 dwelling units per acre (du/ac), should be retained.
2. The Heritage Resources submittals (APR Items 04-III-1UP and 04-III-6UP) should be incorporated into the Plan.
3. Other refinements of existing Plan language should be made to preserve and enhance the existing character of the Hunter Mill Road community (see section 3.0 at the end of this report).

## **2.0 Introduction**

### **2.1 Task Force Purpose and Charter**

In recent years, a number of proposals to amend the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan for the Hunter Mill Road area north of the Dulles Access Road have been submitted to the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ). The majority of these nominations have been denied in favor of retaining the Comprehensive Plan. All proposals with increases in density and/or changes in land use, other than special permit uses, have been denied.

During the 2004 North County Area Plan Review (APR) process, DPZ received four additional proposals for amending the Plan in the Hunter Mill Road/Sunset Hills Road area. The extent of the area affected and the complexity of the proposals raised concern among the DPZ staff that the normal process for considering proposed changes to the plan might not allow for broader identification and evaluation of issues in the Hunter Mill Road area.

The Board of Supervisors authorized a Special Study on March 21, 2005. A Task Force representing the Hunter Mill and Dranesville Districts was appointed by the Supervisors of each district to consider the range of options for the study area and to develop consensus around a set of recommendations to present to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The objective of the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force is to identify and involve key stakeholders in a process to create a community vision, and solve community challenges by exploring and evaluating the short and long term impacts of development options for this property.

Potential impacts include, but are not limited to, those related to housing, schools, parks, transportation, public facilities, environmental and historical resources, and other county systems.

Various sources of information were input into the Task Force review process. These sources included white papers from the nominators, letters and email from members of the community, presentations from county staff, and the community input process.

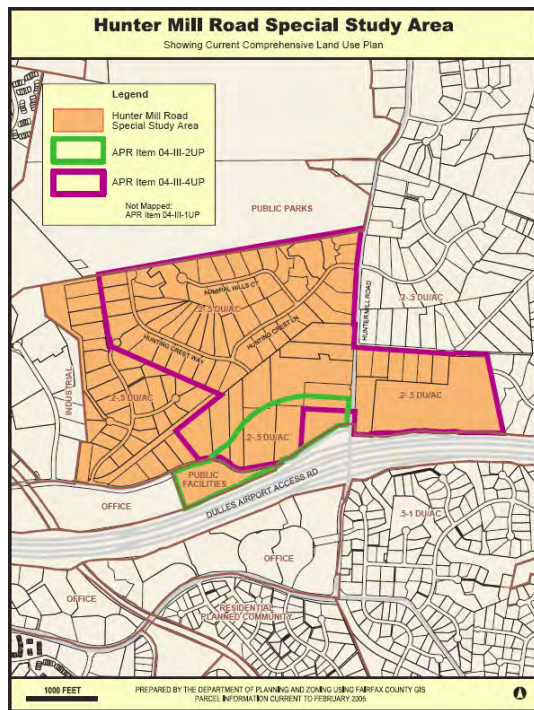
This report summarizes input from the various sources and presents a set of written recommendations that will be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

### **2.2 History of the Special Study Area**

What follows is the physical description of the study area boundaries as they were established by the Board of Supervisors, including a map. The study area comprises

approximately 310 acres located east and west of Hunter Mill Road near Sunset Hills Road and the Dulles Airport Access Toll Road.

The portion west of Hunter Mill Road includes all of the parcels east of Lake Fairfax



Business Park, south of Lake Fairfax Park and north of Sunset Hills Road, and the Virginia Department of Transportation maintenance yard located south of Sunset Hills Road. The portion east of Hunter Mill Road includes the parcels located in the northeast quadrant of Dulles Toll Road and Hunter Mill Road, south of Crowell Road that are currently used as a golf park.

In the current Comprehensive Plan, the study area is designated for low-density residential uses. The Plan recommends the use of a buffer to separate the low-density Equestrian Park subdivision from higher-intensity uses in Lake Fairfax Business Park. In general, the planned low-density residential area near Difficult Run is intended to prevent commercial land uses in Tysons Corner and the town of Reston from merging. In addition,

the planned low-density residential area protects the environmentally sensitive Difficult Run watershed.

For over forty years, the Comprehensive Plan has maintained a policy of low-density residential use in this area, which has had near-unanimous support of residents in the Hunter Mill Road area and Reston, and has been reaffirmed by the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, DPZ staff and community leaders. In all Plan reviews, nominations to amend the Comprehensive Plan that were deemed incompatible with the existing land-use policy have been consistently denied. Most of those proposals sought to increase density and change the mix of land uses. A few proposals to add language to address special exceptions and special permit uses, alternative alignments for Sunset Hills Road, and language about the historic character of Hunter Mill Road corridor were adopted into the Comprehensive Plan.

## 2.3 Critical Issues and Development Alternatives Considered

In an attempt to gauge the impact of development in the Special Study area the Task Force considered three general development scenarios. These scenarios ranged from 154 single family homes at the low end (developed consistent with the current comprehensive plan language) to 2400 dwelling units and 47,000 square feet of commercial development

at the high end. The high end of the range was derived by applying the densities suggested by the 04-III-4UP nomination to the entire study area.

**Development Alternatives Considered:**

**Alternative 1:** Study area develops as currently planned, residential use at .2-.5 du/ac.

Result: 309 ac @ .5 du/ac = **154 single family homes**

**Alternative 2:** Study area develops at 1-2 du/ac, with office use south of a realigned Sunset Hills Road.

Result: 34 ac @ .15 du/ac = **222,156 sf Office** and 275 ac @ 2 du/ac = **550 single family**

**Alternative 3:** Study area develops at 5-8 du/ac, with support non-residential uses.

Result: Non-residential: **28,000 sf Retail, 19,000 sf Office**

Residential: 300ac @ 8 du/ac = **2,400 du** (approx. 900 single family, 900 townhouse, 600 low-rise multifamily)

These three development scenarios were studied with respect to traffic, schools, parks, recreation, utilities, and environmental impacts. Data points for study came from both the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and various county agencies.

## **2.4 Transportation**

Per VDOT, Hunter Mill Road is designated a minor arterial, for Level of Service (LOS) “D”, and has an estimated capacity of 15,600 vehicles per day (VPD) for 2-lanes.

Using VDOT traffic counts from the year 2000, the average daily traffic volume on Hunter Mill Road from the Dulles Toll Road south to Sunrise Valley Road is 21,100 VPD. From the Dulles Toll Road north to Crowell Road the count is 15,000 VPD. Based on VDOT’s estimated capacity for 2-lanes, the section between Sunset Hills Road and Crowell Road is currently operating close to capacity.

Fairfax County DOT trip generation estimates for the three development scenarios shown in the table below range up to 21,538 trips per day. Most of the traffic created by this trip generation would occur on Hunter Mill Road, which is already operating at or near capacity.

### Trip Generation Estimates

|                       | <u>Daily</u> | <u>AM Peak In</u> | <u>AM Peak Out</u> | <u>PM Peak In</u> | <u>PM Peak Out</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Alternative 1         |              |                   |                    |                   |                    |
| 154 single family du  | 1,474        | 29                | 87                 | 98                | 58                 |
| Alternative 2         |              |                   |                    |                   |                    |
| 550 single family du  | 5,264        | 103               | 309                | 350               | 206                |
| 222,156 office        | 2,446        | 303               | 41                 | 56                | 275                |
| Total                 | 7,710        | 406               | 350                | 406               | 481                |
| Alternative 3         |              |                   |                    |                   |                    |
| 900 single family du  | 8,613        | 169               | 506                | 573               | 336                |
| 900 townhouse du      | 7,560        | 99                | 387                | 378               | 207                |
| 600 multi-family du   | 3,954        | 58                | 218                | 226               | 122                |
| Residential Total     | 20,127       | 326               | 1,111              | 1,177             | 665                |
| 19,000 sf office      | 209          | 26                | 4                  | 5                 | 23                 |
| 28,000 sf retail      | 1,202        | 18                | 11                 | 50                | 55                 |
| Non-Residential Total | 1,411        | 44                | 15                 | 55                | 78                 |
| Total                 | 21,538       | 369               | 1,126              | 1,232             | 743                |

## 2.5 Schools

The study area is served by Wolftrap Elementary, Thoreau Middle School, and Madison High School. As shown in Table 1 below, Wolftrap Elementary has 605 students enrolled in 2005 and a capacity of 571 students. Thoreau Middle School has a current enrollment of 724 and a capacity of 725 students. Madison High School has 1883 students enrolled and a capacity of 1875 students.

**TABLE 1**

| <b>SCHOOL</b>  | <b>CAPACITY*</b> | <b>2005 Actual Enroll.*</b> | <b>Enroll/Cap Difference 2005</b> | <b>2010 Projected Enroll.*</b> | <b>Enroll/Cap Difference 2008-09</b> |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Wolftrap (K-6) | 571              | 605                         | -34                               | 627                            | -56                                  |
| Thoreau (7-8)  | 725              | 724                         | 1                                 | 708                            | 17                                   |
| Madison (9-12) | 1875             | 1883                        | -8                                | 1875                           | 0                                    |

\* Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, Office of Facilities Planning Services, FY 2007 - 2011 Capital Improvement Program

Table 2 shows the number of students generated under the different development scenarios. All of the development alternatives will create problems at the elementary

level: Alternative 1 could be accommodated with temporary classrooms. Alternatives 2 and 3 would require capital improvements such as an addition (alternative 2) or possibly a new school (alternative 3). The middle and high school facilities should be able to accommodate the enrollment from any of the three alternatives, although Alternative 3 may require a modular addition or temporary classrooms at the middle and high school levels.

**TABLE 2**

|               | <b>Total Households</b> | <b>Elementary</b> | <b>Middle</b> | <b>High</b> | <b>Total Students</b> |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Alternative 1 | 154                     | 38                | 11            | 24          | 73                    |
| Alternative 2 | 550                     | 134               | 39            | 87          | 260                   |
| Alternative 3 | 2400                    | 491               | 129           | 277         | 897                   |

## 2.6 Parks and Recreation

The following table shows the county currently has a deficit of parkland and athletic fields in region surrounding the Special Study Area:

| <b>Facility Type</b>             | <b>Service Level Standards</b> | <b>Scenario 1 Pop: 496</b> | <b>Scenario 2 Pop: 1771</b> | <b>Scenario 3 Pop: 6555</b> | <b>Current Deficit</b> |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Local Parkland                   | 5 acres/1000                   | 2.48 acres                 | 8.85 acres                  | 32.77 acres                 | (385)                  |
| District and Countywide Parkland | 13 acres/1000                  | 6.44 acres                 | 23.02 acres                 | 85.21 acres                 | (351)                  |
| Rectangle Fields                 | 1 field/2,700                  | 0                          | 1                           | 2                           | (10)                   |
| Adult Baseball                   | 1 field/24,000                 | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | (4)                    |
| Adult Softball                   | 1 field/22,000                 | 0                          | 0                           | 0                           | (1)                    |
| Youth Baseball                   | 1 field/7,200                  | 0                          | 0                           | 1                           | (9)                    |
| Youth Softball                   | 1 field/8,800                  | 0                          | 0                           | 1                           | (3)                    |
| Basketball Courts                | 1 court/2,100                  | 0                          | 1                           | 3                           | (36)                   |
| Playgrounds                      | 1 apparatus/2,800              | 0                          | 1                           | 2                           | (21)                   |

Specifically this area has a current deficit of 385 acres of local parkland. With the high density scenario the deficit would grow to 418 acres. This does not include land required for an additional 9 athletic fields/playgrounds required to simply maintain the current deficit in parks and recreation facilities.

## 2.7 Utilities

Based on presentations from County Staff there do not appear to be any significant issues developing this area with respect to water and sewer. Per Fairfax Water:



“Despite the additional demands anticipated by the proposed expansion, water supply should not be considered an impediment to development. Fairfax Water’s rate structure employs a growth funded by growth approach to system development. Improvements to the water system necessary to support increased land use density on a given site are provided by the site’s developer; either through direct contribution or payment of connection charges.”

## **2.8 Environmental**

A Resource Protection Area (RPA) and an Environmental Quality Corridor (EQC) on the northwestern corner of the study area traverse in a North/South direction and a more extensive RPA/EQC traverses an aspect of the northeastern portion of the site west of Hunter Mill Road. The EQC/ RPA should be protected and development should not occur within these environmentally sensitive areas.

The Fairfax County Soil Survey demonstrates some areas of hydric soil throughout the subject property. Hydric soil is one parameter which is evaluated when delineating jurisdictional wetlands. Any land disturbance in jurisdictional wetland areas will require appropriate permitting under the Clean Water Act. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality review all activities and administer the requirements § 404 of the Clean Water Act for activity associated with development in the non-tidal waterways and non-tidal wetlands.

A portion of the Hunter Mill Road Special Study Area is characterized by a swath of Orange Soil, which could contain naturally occurring asbestos (NOA), which traverses in a north and south direction through the study area west of Hunter Mill Road, specifically in the location of the Bachman Property.

The study area is within the Difficult Run watershed. The 2001 Fairfax County Stream Protection Strategy Baseline Study classifies this area as a Watershed Restoration Level II. The primary goal for this category is to, “Maintain areas to prevent further degradation and implement measures to improve water quality to support or comply with Chesapeake Bay Initiatives, Total Maximum Daily Load (TDML) regulations and other water quality initiatives and standards.”

The Fairfax County Physical Stream Assessment (published in 2004) rates this watershed as having fair quality (on a scale ranging from very poor to excellent). In addition, the study found a total of 1814 ‘inventory points’ (deficient buffers, crossings, ditches and pipes, erosion, head cuts, obstruction, and utilities) in Difficult Run that indicate areas of concern.

With respect to highway noise any residential development proposed adjacent to the Dulles Road will require mitigation, both interior and exterior, for noise.

## 2.9 Community Vision

A Vision Report was developed as the result of an eight-week public engagement process initiated by the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force and the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning. In September 2005, CirclePoint was hired to create a forum to elicit comments from the public on the future of a Special Study Area, created by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and to convey that information to the Task Force. The primary goal has been to establish the preferred future use of the Special Study Area.

In the visioning exercise, focus groups, written comments and statements made at public meetings, members of the community consistently communicated their preference for no change in the current Comprehensive Plan in very clear and strong terms:

**Given the frequency of the sentiment and large degree of participation in the community visioning process by residents in the Hunter Mill Road corridor, with approximately 300 people attending the visioning session and over 350 people attending the second workshop, a clear consensus has emerged in very clear and strong terms that residents in the corridor prefer no change in the current Comprehensive Plan land use designations in the Hunter Mill Road area.**

### **3.0 Task Force Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1: County Wide Issues**

The Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force has found that addressing certain countywide issues in the context of a small geographic area is difficult, if not impossible. These include, but are not limited to, affordable housing, infill, parks and recreation deficits, and congestion mitigation. Therefore, the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force recommends that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors continue a countywide dialogue to develop the community's consensus on issues related to future growth and development. This countywide dialogue should address such issues as expected job and housing growth, affordable and workforce housing, relationship of transportation solutions and housing, and increased recreational opportunities for Fairfax County citizens.

#### **Recommendation 2: Heritage Resources**

The Task Force recommends that the two Plan changes (APR Items 04-III-1UP and 04-III-6UP) for Heritage Resources should be incorporated into the Plan as specified in Attachment A.

#### **Recommendation 3: Density**

The Task Force finds that the Special Study Area is well served by the current Comprehensive Plan and higher density development of any kind is not suitable, and therefore recommends no change in the allowed density and/or permitted use of the study area. Therefore, the Study Area should remain designated for low-density residential use at 0.2 to 0.5 dwelling units per acre.

#### **Recommendation 4: Asbestos**

A portion of the Special Study area includes land that the County has identified as possibly containing naturally occurring asbestos (NOA). It is currently zoned for residential use. While the County has specific requirements applicable to construction activities in areas with possible NOA, the Task Force recommends that the Board of Supervisors amend the Official Zoning Map to show the location of areas possibly containing NOA, similar to the designation of Marine Clay soils. This approach would alert homeowners or potential homeowners to the possible presence of NOA and the need to prepare and implement a Compliance Plan in connection with any on-site construction activities.

#### **Recommendation 5: Park-Trail Access**

The Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force believes that access to existing park and recreation facilities from the special study area needs to be improved for the benefit of local citizens and others. This includes walking, bicycling, and equestrian

modes. Therefore, the Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force recommends that trails, paths, and other connections from the study area to Lake Fairfax Park, the Washington and Old Dominion Trail, and other park resources be improved.

## **Recommendation 6: Transportation System**

- 6.1 The Task Force believes there is a serious need to improve the interchange of Hunter Mill Road, Sunset Hills Road and the Dulles Airport Access and Toll Road to enhance safety, improve sight distance, provide for more efficient vehicle turning movements and mitigate congestion. Moreover, the realignment of Sunset Hills Road could be a component of this interchange improvement. Therefore, the Task Force supports the current language in the Comprehensive Plan for the realignment of Sunset Hills Road, in options A and B, and recommends these options, along with those identified in the report of the Hunter Mill Interchange Task Force, be further studied so that a community consensus can be developed.
- 6.2 The Task Force recommends any development affecting land fronting on Sunset Hills Road or Hunter Mill Road along the selected alignment should provide rights of way, easements, dedications, and other contributions to accommodate the consensus solution.
- 6.3 The Task Force recommends the Comprehensive Plan be amended to indicate strong opposition to a realignment of Sunset Hills Road to a point at or near Crowell Road.
- 6.4 Furthermore, the Task Force recommends this project once again be made a priority for VDOT funding, and that all Preliminary Engineering work be completed as soon as feasible in order to officially resolve the design and location issues.
- 6.5 The Task Force also recommends the Comprehensive Plan be amended to include traffic calming strategies on Hunter Mill Road to achieve the following goals:
  - reduce unnecessary through traffic,
  - slow the average speed of vehicles and create more uniform speeds, while reducing the frequency of stop-and-go operations,
  - reduce crashes,
  - improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians, and encourage such activity,
  - reduce the current and future impact of the road on its visual and natural environment, including the man-made environment,
  - increase the consistency of roadway cross-sections and design standards along its entire length, and
  - improve the attractiveness of the road and its immediate roadside appearance.

## Attachment A

The Hunter Mill Road Area Special Study Task Force supports the adoption of additional text recognizing Hunter Mill Road as a Virginia Byway and as eligible for listing on The Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places (APR Nos. 04-III-1UP & 6UP) based on the Staff Alternative recommended by the 2004 Providence and Sully District Task Forces, as follows (additions shown in underline):

*There are known and potential heritage resources located along the 7.2 mile length of Hunter Mill Road, a portion of which lies in this Planning District. Such resources include sites or structures that are evidence of Native American occupation, pre-Revolutionary and Civil War activities, and the County's agrarian past. Actions to document these heritage resources, and to protect and preserve those that are determined by the County to be of historic or archaeological significance are underway and should be encouraged. Hunter Mill Road has been determined to be eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This determination of eligibility is the first step in the process for being listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or the National Register of Historic Places. Hunter Mill Road has been designated as a Virginia Byway.*

These changes would appear in the Comprehensive Plan, 2003 edition, Area III, Upper Potomac Planning District, amended through 7-11-2005, Overview on p.11.

## **Appendices**